



UNIVERSITY OF LONDON LIBRARY

This book

should be returned to the

Extra-Mural Library

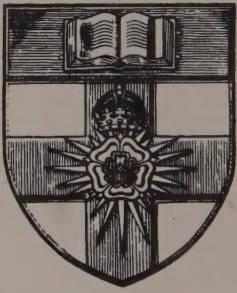
8
J
OL

ch's
Acting
Edition

828
PIN
COL

1911103317

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON



EXTRA-MURAL LIBRARY

THE COLLECTION

A Play in One Act

by

HAROLD PINTER

SAMUEL



FRENCH

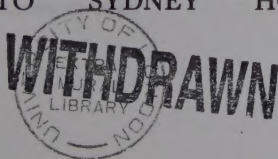
LONDON

NEW YORK

TORONTO

SYDNEY

HOLLYWOOD



© 1963 by H. Pinter Ltd

This play is fully protected under the copyright laws of the British Commonwealth of Nations, the United States of America, and all countries of the Berne and Universal Copyright Conventions.

All rights are strictly reserved.

It is an infringement of the copyright to give any public performance or reading of this play either in its entirety or in the form of excerpts without the prior consent of the copyright owners. No part of this publication may be transmitted, stored in a retrieval system, or reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, manuscript, typescript, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the Copyright owners.

SAMUEL FRENCH LTD, 26 SOUTHAMPTON STREET, STRAND, LONDON, WC2. or their authorized agents, issue licences to amateurs to give performances of this play on payment of a fee. **The fee must be paid, and the licence obtained, before a performance is given.**

Licences are issued subject to the understanding that it shall be made clear in all advertising matter that the audience will witness an amateur performance; and that the names of the authors of plays shall be included in all announcements and on all programmes.

The royalty fee indicated below is subject to contract and subject to variation at the sole discretion of Samuel French Ltd.

Fee for each and every performance by amateurs in the British Isles	£3.15	£3 3s
---	-------	-------

In territories overseas the fee quoted above may not apply. A quotation will be given upon application to the authorized agents, or direct to Samuel French Ltd.

GB 573 02036 1

MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
LATIMER TREND AND CO. LTD, WHITSTABLE
MADE IN ENGLAND

THE COLLECTION

Produced by the Royal Shakespeare Company at the Aldwych Theatre, London, on the 18th June 1962, with the following cast of characters:

(in the order of their appearance)

HARRY	<i>Michael Hordern</i>
STELLA	<i>Barbara Murray</i>
JAMES	<i>Kenneth Haigh</i>
BILL	<i>John Ronane</i>

Directed by PETER HALL and HAROLD PINTER

Setting by PAUL ANSTEE and JOHN BURY

*The action of the Play passes in Harry's house in Belgravia
and James' flat in Chelsea*

Time—the present

THE COLLECTION

Presented to the Library of the University of Toronto
by the Hon. J. G. Macdonald, M.P.

1871-1872
1873-1874
1875-1876
1877-1878
1879-1880
1881-1882
1883-1884
1885-1886
1887-1888
1889-1890
1891-1892
1893-1894
1895-1896
1897-1898
1899-1900
1901-1902
1903-1904
1905-1906
1907-1908
1909-1910
1911-1912
1913-1914
1915-1916
1917-1918
1919-1920
1921-1922
1923-1924
1925-1926
1927-1928
1929-1930
1931-1932
1933-1934
1935-1936
1937-1938
1939-1940
1941-1942
1943-1944
1945-1946
1947-1948
1949-1950
1951-1952
1953-1954
1955-1956
1957-1958
1959-1960
1961-1962
1963-1964
1965-1966
1967-1968
1969-1970
1971-1972
1973-1974
1975-1976
1977-1978
1979-1980
1981-1982
1983-1984
1985-1986
1987-1988
1989-1990
1991-1992
1993-1994
1995-1996
1997-1998
1999-2000
2001-2002
2003-2004
2005-2006
2007-2008
2009-2010
2011-2012
2013-2014
2015-2016
2017-2018
2019-2020
2021-2022
2023-2024
2025-2026
2027-2028
2029-2030
2031-2032
2033-2034
2035-2036
2037-2038
2039-2040
2041-2042
2043-2044
2045-2046
2047-2048
2049-2050
2051-2052
2053-2054
2055-2056
2057-2058
2059-2060
2061-2062
2063-2064
2065-2066
2067-2068
2069-2070
2071-2072
2073-2074
2075-2076
2077-2078
2079-2080
2081-2082
2083-2084
2085-2086
2087-2088
2089-2090
2091-2092
2093-2094
2095-2096
2097-2098
2099-2100

Library of the University of Toronto
128 St. George Street
Toronto, Ontario
M5S 1A5
Canada

THE COLLECTION

SCENE—Harry's house in Belgravia and James' flat in Chelsea.
An autumn evening.

The stage is divided into three areas, two peninsulas and a promontory. Each area is distinct and separate from the other. Harry's house is L. The décor is elegant with period furnishing. This setting comprises the living-room and the hall with the front door and staircase to the first floor. There is an exit to the kitchen below the staircase. In the living-room there is a small round table C, with carver chairs R and L of it. A sideboard for drinks is L. A console table stands up C, with brackets for ornaments on the wall behind it. A pouffe stands R and a fender and fire-irons down C, indicate the fireplace. A low-backed fireside chair is down L with a small occasional table L of it. A telephone is on the console table up C. There is a hatstand in the hall, below the stairs.

James' flat is R. This setting, on a low rostrum, shows the living-room with tasteful, contemporary furnishings. The front door and other rooms are off R. Up RC is a long sofa with a low coffee-table in front of it. An upholstered armchair stands L, with a small occasional table above it. A long, low radiogram is down LC with a record cabinet R of it. Up LC in the street outside the front door to Harry's house there is a "promontory" with a telephone-box.

When the CURTAIN rises, it is late at night. The rooms are in darkness. The hall area is lit. It is moonlight in the street up LC and the telephone-box interior light is on. The figure of JAMES, unrecognized by the audience, can be dimly observed inside the telephone-box, with his back to the audience. The telephone in Harry's house L is ringing. HARRY, a man in his forties, enters up C in the street, opens the front door of his house, goes into the hall, closes the door and switches on the lights. The lights come up on the room L. HARRY moves to the telephone and lifts the receiver.

HARRY (*into the telephone*) Hulloo?

(*JAMES' voice is heard*)

JAMES (*through the telephone*) Is that you, Bill?

HARRY. No, he's in bed. Who's this?

JAMES. In bed?

HARRY. Who is this?

JAMES. What's he doing in bed?

(*There is a pause*)

HARRY. Do you know it's four o'clock in the morning?

JAMES. Well, give him a nudge. Tell him I want a word with him.

(*There is a pause*)

HARRY. Who is this?

JAMES. Go and wake him up, there's a good boy.

(*There is a pause*)

HARRY. Are you a friend of his?

JAMES. He'll know me when he sees me.

HARRY. Oh, yes?

(*There is a pause*)

JAMES. Aren't you going to wake him?

HARRY. No, I'm not.

(*There is a pause*)

JAMES. Tell him I'll be in touch.

(*JAMES replaces the receiver, leaves the telephone-box and exits up R. The light in the box goes out.*)

HARRY replaces his receiver, goes slowly into the hall, switches off the lights and exits up the stairs. The lights fade in the room L, in the hall and in the street and come up on the room R. It is morning.

JAMES, a man in his thirties, enters down R. He is casually

dressed and is smoking a cigarette. He sits on the sofa and picks up a cup of coffee from the table in front of him.

STELLA, a woman in her thirties, enters down R, carrying her coat. She drops the coat on to the sofa, goes to the radiogram, picks up her gloves and puts them on. She picks up her purse and handbag from the radiogram, looks in the purse, puts it in the handbag then takes a bracelet from the bag, puts the bag on the radiogram and fixes the bracelet on her wrist. She then takes a perfume atomizer from the bag, uses it on her throat and replaces it in the bag. There is a silence)

STELLA. I'm going. (She pauses) Aren't you coming in today?

JAMES (after a pause) No. (He puts down his cup)

STELLA. You had to meet those people from . . .

(There is a pause. JAMES sits still)

(She moves slowly to the sofa, picks up her coat, puts it on, then turns to James) You had to meet those people about that order. Shall I phone them when I get to the shop?

JAMES. You could do—yes.

STELLA. What are you going to do?

(JAMES looks at her, with a brief smile, then looks away)

Jimmy . . . (She pauses and collects her handbag) Are you going out? (She pauses) Will you—be in tonight?

(JAMES reaches for a glass ashtray, flicks his ash into it and regards the ashtray.)

STELLA turns and exits down R. The front door is heard to slam. JAMES continues regarding the ashtray. The lights on the room R fade to half. The lights come up on the room L and the hall. It is morning.

BILL, a man in his late twenties, enters from the kitchen L carrying a tray with breakfast for two, and a newspaper. He puts the tray on the table, arranges the breakfast things, sits R of the table, props the newspaper on the toast rack, reads and sips his fruit juice.

HARRY, *in his dressing-room, enters down the stairs, trips on them and stumbles*)

BILL (*looking up*) What have you done?

HARRY. I tripped on that stair rod. (*He comes into the room*)

BILL. All right?

HARRY. It's that stair rod. I thought you said you were going to fix it.

BILL. I did fix it.

HARRY. Well, you didn't fix it very well. (*He sits L of the table and holds his head*) Ooh.

(*BILL pours tea.*)

JAMES, *in the room R, stubs out his cigarette, rises and exits R. The lights on the room R fade*)

(*He sips his tea, puts down the cup and looks at the table*) Where's my fruit juice? I haven't had my fruit juice.

(*BILL reaches behind his newspaper and passes a glass of fruit juice to Harry*)

What's it doing over there? (*He sips the fruit juice*) What's this? Pineapple?

BILL. Grapefruit.

(*There is a pause*)

HARRY. I'm sick and tired of that stair rod. Why don't you screw it in or something? You're supposed—you're supposed to be able to use your hands.

(*There is a pause*)

BILL. What time did you get in?

HARRY. Four.

BILL. Good party?

HARRY (*after a pause*) You didn't make any toast this morning.

BILL. No. Do you want some?

HARRY. No, I don't.

BILL. I can if you like.

HARRY. It's all right. Don't bother.

(There is a pause)

How are you spending your day today?

BILL. Go and see a film, I think.

HARRY. Wonderful life you lead. *(He pauses and sips his tea)* Do you know some maniac telephoned you last night?

(BILL looks at Harry)

Just as I got in. Four o'clock. Walked in the door and the telephone was ringing.

BILL. Who was it?

HARRY. I've no idea.

BILL. What did he want?

HARRY. You. He was shy, wouldn't tell me his name. Who could it have been?

BILL. I've no idea.

HARRY. He was very insistent. Said he was going to get in touch again. *(He pauses)* Who the hell was it?

BILL. I've just said—I haven't the remotest idea.

(There is a pause)

HARRY. Did you meet anyone last week?

BILL. Meet anyone? What do you mean?

HARRY. I mean, could it have been anyone you met? You must have met lots of people.

BILL. I didn't speak to a soul.

HARRY. Must have been miserable for you.

BILL. I was only there one night, wasn't I? *(He picks up the teapot)* Some more?

HARRY. No, thank you.

(BILL pours tea for himself. The lights come up to half on the telephone-box.)

JAMES, *in an overcoat, enters up R and goes into the box. The light in the box comes on. BILL reads his paper)*

I must shave. *(He looks at Bill)*

(There is a pause)

BILL (*looking up*) Mmmmn?

(*There is a silence.*)

HARRY *rises, goes into the hall and exits up the stairs.*
BILL *reads. After a moment, the telephone rings. BILL rises, goes to the telephone and lifts the receiver)*

(*Into the telephone*) Hallo?

(*JAMES' voice is heard*)

JAMES (*through the telephone*) Is that you, Bill?

BILL. Yes?

JAMES. Are you in?

BILL. Who's this?

JAMES. Don't move. I'll be straight round.

BILL. What do you mean? Who is this?

JAMES. About two minutes. All right?

BILL. I'm sorry—you can't do that. I've got some people here.

JAMES. Never mind. We can go into another room.

BILL. This is ridiculous. Do I know you?

JAMES. You'll know me when you see me.

BILL. Do you know me?

JAMES. Just stay where you are. I'll be right round.

BILL. But what do you want? Who . . . ? You can't do that, I'm going straight out, I won't be in.

JAMES. See you.

(*JAMES replaces the receiver, leaves the telephone-box and exits L. The light in the box goes out.*)

BILL *replaces his receiver, goes into the hall, puts on his overcoat, swift but not hurried, goes out of the front door and exits R)*

HARRY (*off upstairs; calling*) Bill, was that you?

(*HARRY enters on the stairs*)

(*He calls*) Bill.

(*HARRY comes down the stairs, treads carefully over the stair*

rod, goes into the living-room, looks around then collects the breakfast things and exits with the tray to the kitchen.

JAMES enters L in the street, comes to the front door and rings the bell.

HARRY enters from the kitchen, goes into the hall and opens the front door)

Yes?

JAMES. I'm looking for Bill Lloyd.

HARRY. He's out. Can I help?

JAMES. When will he be in?

HARRY. I can't say. Does he know you?

JAMES. I'll try some other time, then.

HARRY. Well, perhaps you'd like to leave your name. I can tell him when I see him.

JAMES. No, that's all right. Just tell him I called.

HARRY. Tell him who called?

JAMES. Sorry to bother you. (*He turns to go*)

HARRY. Just a minute.

(JAMES stops and turns)

You're not the man who telephoned last night, are you?

JAMES. Last night?

HARRY. You didn't telephone early this morning?

JAMES. No—sorry . . .

HARRY. Well, what do you want?

JAMES. I'm looking for Bill.

HARRY. You didn't by any chance telephone just now?

JAMES. I think you've got the wrong man.

HARRY. I think you have.

JAMES. I don't think you know anything about it.

(JAMES turns and exits up R.

HARRY watches him go then closes the door and exits up the stairs. The lights in the room L fade. The light in the street fades. Lights come up on the room R for moonlight effect. The front door is heard to slam. The hall light off R comes on.

STELLA enters R, crosses to the table-lamp and switches it on. The lights come up on the room R to half. STELLA removes her coat and puts it on the sofa, then looks off R)

STELLA (*calling*) Jimmy? (*She listens*)

(*There is silence.*)

STELLA *puts down her handbag, goes to the radiogram, puts on a record and switches it on. It is cool jazz. She then picks up her coat and exits R. The lights come up on the room and hall L. It is night.*

BILL *enters L from the kitchen, carrying some magazines which he throws on the floor down C. He goes to the sideboard, pours a drink, picks up the glasses, moves C, lies on the floor, puts the drink beside him and flicks through a magazine.*

HARRY *enters down the stairs, goes out of the front door and exits up R.*

STELLA *enters R, carrying a white Persian kitten. She lies on the sofa, nuzzling the kitten. The hall light R goes out.*

JAMES *enters the street from L, goes to the front door and rings the bell. The lights on the room R dim a little. The music fades out. BILL rises, picks up his glass, puts it on the table, goes into the hall and opens the front door*)

BILL. Yes?

JAMES. Bill Lloyd?

BILL. Yes?

JAMES (*after a pause*) Oh, I'd—I'd like to have a word with you.

BILL (*after a pause*) I'm sorry, I don't think I know you.

JAMES. Don't you?

BILL. No.

JAMES. Well, there's something I'd like to talk to you about.

BILL. I'm terribly sorry, I'm busy.

JAMES. It won't take long.

BILL. I'm awfully sorry. Perhaps you'd like to put it down on paper and send it to me.

JAMES. That's not possible.

(*There is a pause*)

BILL (*closing the door*) Do forgive me . . .

JAMES (*putting his foot in the door*) Look, I want to speak to you.

(There is a long pause)

BILL. Did you phone me today?

JAMES. That's right. I called, but you'd gone out.

BILL. You called here? I didn't know that.

JAMES. I think I'd better come in, don't you?

BILL. You can't just barge into someone's house like this, you know. What do you want?

JAMES. Why don't you stop wasting your time and let me in?

BILL. I could call the police.

JAMES. Not worth it.

(They stare at each other)

BILL. All right. *(He stands aside)*

(JAMES enters the hall and goes into the living-room. BILL closes the front door and follows James in. JAMES looks about the room)

JAMES. Got any olives?

BILL. How did you know my name?

JAMES. No olives?

BILL. Olives? I'm afraid not.

JAMES. You mean to say you don't keep olives for your guests?

BILL. You're not my guest, you're an intruder. What can I do for you?

JAMES. Do you mind if I sit down?

BILL. Yes, I do.

JAMES. You'll get over it. *(He sits R of the table, then rises, removes his coat, puts it over the back of his chair then resumes his seat)*

BILL. What's your name, old boy?

(JAMES reaches to a bowl of fruit, takes a grape and eats it)

JAMES. Where shall I put the pips?

BILL. In your wallet.

(JAMES takes out his wallet and deposits the pips)

JAMES (*regarding Bill*) You're not a bad-looking bloke.

BILL. Oh, thanks.

JAMES. You're not a film star, but you're quite tolerable looking, I suppose.

BILL. That's more than I can say for you.

JAMES. I'm not interested in what you can say for me.

BILL. To put it quite bluntly, old chap, I'm even less interested than you are. Now look, come on, please, what do you want?

(JAMES rises, crosses to the sideboard and stares at the bottles.

STELLA, in the room R, rises with the kitten and exits slowly R, nuzzling it. The lights fade on the room R. JAMES pours a whisky for himself. BILL moves R)

Cheers.

JAMES (*crossing to L of Bill*) Did you have a good time in Leeds last week?

BILL. What?

JAMES. Did you have a good time in Leeds last week?

BILL. Leeds?

JAMES. Did you enjoy yourself?

BILL. What makes you think I was in Leeds?

JAMES. Tell me all about it. See much of the town? Get out to the country at all?

BILL. What are you talking about?

(*There is a pause. JAMES crosses to the chair down L and sits*)

JAMES (*with fatigue*) Aaah. You were down there for the dress collection. You took some of your models.

BILL. Did I?

JAMES. You stayed at the *Westbury Hotel*.

BILL. Oh?

JAMES. Room one-four-two.

BILL. One-four-two? Oh. Was it comfortable?

JAMES. Comfortable enough.

BILL. Oh, good.

JAMES. Well, you had your yellow pyjamas with you.

BILL. Did I, really? What, the ones with the black initials?

JAMES. Yes, you had them on you in one-six-five.

BILL. In what?

JAMES. One-six-five.

BILL. One-six-five? I thought I was in one-four-two.

JAMES. You looked into one-four-two. But you didn't stay there.

BILL. Well, that's a bit silly, isn't it? Booking a room and not staying in it.

JAMES. One-six-five is just along the passage to one-four-two, you're not far away.

BILL. Oh, well, that's a relief.

JAMES. You could easily nip back to shave.

BILL. From one-six-five?

JAMES. Yes.

BILL. What was I doing there?

JAMES (*casually*). My wife was in there. That's where you slept with her.

(*There is a silence*)

BILL. Well—who told you that?

JAMES. She did.

BILL. You should have her seen to.

JAMES. Be careful.

BILL. Mmmm? Who is your wife?

JAMES. You know her.

BILL. I don't think so.

JAMES. No?

BILL. No, I don't think so at all.

JAMES. I see.

BILL. I was nowhere near Leeds last week, old chap. Nowhere near your wife, either, I'm quite sure of that. Apart from that, I—just don't do such things. Not in my book. (*He pauses*) I wouldn't dream of it. Well, I think that closes the subject, don't you?

JAMES. Come here. I want to tell you something.

BILL. I'm expecting guests in a minute, you know. Cocktails. I'm standing for Parliament next season.

JAMES. Come here.

BILL. I'm going to be Minister for Home Affairs.

(JAMES rises and crosses to Bill)

JAMES (*confidentially*) When you treat my wife like a whore, then I think I'm entitled to know what you've got to say about it.

BILL. But I don't know your wife.

JAMES. You do. You met her at ten o'clock last Friday in the lounge. You fell into conversation, you bought her a couple of drinks, you went upstairs together in the lift. In the lift you never took your eyes from her, you found you were both on the same floor, you helped her out, by her arm. You stood with her in the corridor, looking at her. You touched her shoulder, said good night, went to your room, she went to hers, you changed into your yellow pyjamas and black dressing-gown, you went down the passage and knocked on her door, you'd left your tooth-paste in town. She opened the door, you went in, she was still dressed. You admired the room, it was so feminine, you felt awake, didn't feel like sleeping, you sat down on the bed. (*He crosses to the pouffe*) She wanted you to go, you wouldn't. She became upset, you sympathized, away from home, on business, horrible life, especially for a woman. You comforted her, you gave her solace, you stayed.

BILL (*after a pause*) Look, do you mind—just going off, now? You're giving me a bit of a headache.

JAMES (*sitting on the pouffe*) You knew she was married—why did you feel it necessary—to do that?

BILL. She must have known she was married, too. Why did she feel it necessary—to do that?

(*There is a pause*)

(*With a chuckle*) That's got you, hasn't it? (*He pauses, crosses to the sideboard, takes a cigarette from a box and lights it*) Well, look, it's really just a lot of rubbish. You know that. (*He moves to the chair down L and sits*) Is she supposed to have resisted me at all?

JAMES. A little.

BILL. Only a little?

JAMES. Yes.

BILL. Do you believe her?

JAMES. Yes.

BILL. Everything she says?

JAMES. Sure.

BILL. Did she bite at all?

JAMES. No.

BILL. Scratch?

JAMES. A little.

BILL. You've got a devoted wife, haven't you? Keeps you very well-informed, right up to the minutest detail. She scratched a little, did she? Where? (*He holds up his hand*) On the hand? No scar. No scar anywhere. Absolutely unscarred. We can go before a Commissioner for Oaths, if you like. I'll strip, show you my unscarred body. Yes, what we need is an independent witness. You got any chambermaids on your side or anything?

(*JAMES applauds briefly*)

JAMES. You're a wag, aren't you? I never thought you'd be such a wag. You've really got a sense of fun. You know what I'd call you?

BILL. What?

JAMES. A wag.

BILL. Oh, thanks very much.

JAMES. No, I'm glad to pay a compliment when a compliment's due. (*He rises and crosses to the sideboard*). What about a drink?

BILL. That's good of you.

JAMES. What will you have?

BILL (*rising and crossing to c*) Got any vodka?

JAMES. Let's see. Yes, I think we can find you some vodka.

BILL. Oh, scrumptious.

JAMES (*turning*) Say that again.

BILL. What?

JAMES. That word.

BILL. What—"scrumptious"?

JAMES. That's it.

BILL. Scrumptious.

JAMES. Marvellous. (*He pours a drink for Bill and refills his own glass*) You probably remember that from school, don't you?

BILL. Now that you mention it I think you might be right.

JAMES. I thought I was. (*He crosses and hands Bill his drink*) Here's your vodka.

BILL. That's very generous of you.

JAMES. Not at all. Cheers.

BILL. Cheers.

(*They drink. BILL moves R*)

JAMES. Eh, come here.

BILL. What?

JAMES. I bet you're a wow at parties.

BILL. Well, it's nice of you to say so, but I wouldn't say I was all that much of a wow.

JAMES. Go on, I bet you are.

BILL (*after a pause*) You think I'm a wow, do you?

JAMES. At parties, I should think you are.

BILL. No, I'm not much of a wow, really. The bloke I share this house with is, though.

JAMES (*moving slowly to Bill*) Oh, I met him. Looked a jolly kind of chap.

BILL. Yes, he's very good at parties. Bit of a conjuror.

JAMES. What—rabbits?

BILL. Well, not so much rabbits, no.

JAMES. No rabbits?

BILL. No. He doesn't like rabbits, actually. They give him hay fever.

JAMES. Poor chap.

BILL. Yes, it is a pity.

JAMES. Seen a doctor about it?

BILL. Oh, he's had it since he was that high.

JAMES. Brought up in the country, I suppose?

BILL. In a manner of speaking, yes. (*He pauses*) Ah, well,

it's been very nice meeting you, old chap. You must come again when the weather's better.

(JAMES makes a sudden move forward. BILL starts back and falls over the pouffe, flat on to the floor. JAMES chuckles)

(After a pause) You've made me spill my drink. You've made me spill it on my cardigan.

(JAMES stands over him)

I could easily kick you from here. (He pauses) Are you going to let me get up? (He pauses) Are you going to let me get up? (He pauses) Now, listen—I'll tell you what—(he pauses) if you let me get up . . . (He pauses) I'm not very comfortable. (He pauses) If you let me get up—I'll—I'll tell you—the truth.

JAMES (after a pause) Tell me the truth from there.

BILL. No. No, when I'm up.

JAMES. Tell me from there.

(There is a pause)

BILL. Oh, well. I'm only telling you because I'm utterly bored. The truth—is that it never happened—what you said, anyway. I didn't know she was married. She never told me. Never said a word. But nothing of that—happened, I can assure you. All that happened was—you were right, actually, about going up in the lift—we—got out of the lift, and then suddenly she was in my arms. Really wasn't my fault, nothing was farther from my mind, biggest surprise of my life, must have found me terribly attractive quite suddenly, I don't know—but I—I didn't refuse. Anyway, we just kissed a bit, only a few minutes, by the lift, no-one about, and that was that, she went to her room. (He props himself up on the pouffe) The rest of it just didn't happen. I mean, I wouldn't do that sort of thing. I mean, that sort of thing—it's just meaningless. I can understand that you're upset, of course, but honestly, there was nothing else to it. Just a few kisses. (He rises, wiping his cardigan) I'm dreadfully sorry, really. I mean, I've no idea why she should make up all that. Pure fantasy. Really rather

naughty of her. (*He moves down L*) Rather alarming. (*He pauses*) Do you know her well?

JAMES. And then about midnight you went into her private bathroom and had a bath. You sang *Coming Through the Rye*. You used her bath towel. Then you walked about the room with her bath towel, pretending you were a Roman.

BILL. Did I?

JAMES. Then I phoned. (*He pauses*) I spoke to her. Asked her how she was. She said she was all right. Her voice was a little low. I asked her to speak up. She didn't have much to say. You were sitting on the bed, next to her.

(*There is a silence*)

BILL. Not sitting. Lying.

(*The lights on the room L and in the hall BLACK-OUT. Church bells are heard. During the BLACK-OUT JAMES crosses to the room R. HARRY enters from the kitchen with the breakfast tray and puts it on the table. BILL puts on a dressing-gown. The lights come up on the room R, on the room L and the hall. It is Sunday morning. JAMES is seated on the sofa in the room R, reading a newspaper. In the room L, BILL is seated R of the table, reading a newspaper. HARRY is seated L of the table, watching Bill. After a few moments, the church bells cease*)

HARRY. Put the paper down.

BILL. What?

HARRY. Put it down.

BILL. Why?

HARRY. You've read it.

BILL. No, I haven't. There's lots to read, you know.

HARRY. I told you to put it down.

(*BILL looks at Harry, throws the paper at him, coolly, and rises. HARRY picks up the paper and reads it*)

BILL. Oh, you just wanted it yourself, did you?

HARRY. Want it? I don't want it. (*He deliberately crumples the paper and drops it*) I don't want it. Do you want it?

BILL. You're being a little erratic this morning, aren't you?

HARRY. Am I?

BILL. I would say you were.

HARRY. Well, you know what it is, don't you?

BILL. No.

HARRY. It's the church bells. You know how church bells always set me off. You know how they affect me.

BILL. I never hear them.

HARRY. You're not the sort of person who would, are you?

BILL. I'm finding all this faintly idiotic. *(He bends to pick up the paper)*

HARRY. Don't touch that paper.

BILL. Why not?

HARRY. Don't touch it.

(BILL stares at Harry then slowly picks up the paper. There is a silence)

BILL *(tossing the paper to Harry)* You have it. I don't want it.

(BILL exits up the stairs. HARRY opens the paper and reads.)

STELLA *enters the room R, carrying a tray with coffee and biscuits. She puts the tray on the coffee-table, sits R of James on the sofa, pours the coffee, puts a cup in front of James, then sips her own coffee)*

STELLA. Would you like a biscuit?

JAMES. No, thank you.

STELLA *(after a pause)* I'm going to have one.

JAMES. You'll get fat.

STELLA. From biscuits?

JAMES. You don't want to get fat, do you?

STELLA. Why not?

JAMES. Perhaps you do.

STELLA. It's not one of my aims.

JAMES. What is your aim? *(He pauses)* I'd like an olive.

STELLA. Olive? We haven't got any.

JAMES. How do you know?

STELLA. I know.

JAMES. Have you looked?

STELLA. I don't need to look, do I? I know what I've got.

JAMES. You know what you've got? (*He pauses*) Why haven't we got any olives?

STELLA. I didn't know you liked them.

JAMES. That must be the reason we've never had them in the house. You've simply never been interested enough in olives to ask me whether I liked them or not.

(*The telephone L rings. HARRY drops the paper, rises, goes to the telephone and lifts the receiver.*)

BILL enters down the stairs and goes slowly into the living-room)

HARRY (*into the telephone*) Hullo?

VOICE (*through the telephone*) Is that BEL four-six-five-o?

HARRY. What? No. Wrong number. (*He replaces the receiver and turns to Bill*) Wrong number. Who do you think it was?

BILL. I didn't think. (*He picks up the paper and sits on the chair down L*)

HARRY (*sitting L of the table*) Oh, by the way, a chap called for you yesterday.

BILL. Oh, yes?

HARRY. Just after you'd gone out.

BILL. Oh, yes?

HARRY (*rising*) Ah, well, time for the joint. (*He picks up the breakfast tray*) Roast or chips?

BILL. I don't want any potatoes, thank you.

HARRY. No potatoes? What an extraordinary thing.

(*HARRY exits to the kitchen with the tray, re-enters immediately, takes a cigarette from the box on the sideboard, lights it then sits L of the table*)

Yes, this chap, he was asking for you, he wanted you.

BILL. What for?

HARRY. He wanted to know if you ever cleaned your shoes with furniture polish.

BILL. Really? How odd.

HARRY. Not odd. Some kind of national survey.

BILL. What did he look like?

HARRY. Oh—lemon hair, nigger-brown teeth, wooden leg, bottle-green eyes—and a toupee. Know him?

BILL. Never met him.

HARRY. You'd know him if you saw him.

BILL. I doubt it.

HARRY. What, a man who looked like that?

BILL. Plenty of men look like that.

HARRY. That's true. That's very true. The only thing is that this particular man was here last night.

BILL. Was he? I didn't see him.

HARRY. Oh, yes, he was here, but I've got a funny feeling he wore a mask. It was the same man but he wore a mask, that's all there is to it. He didn't dance here last night, did he, or do any gymnastics?

BILL. No-one danced here last night.

HARRY. Aah! Well, that's why you didn't notice his wooden leg. I couldn't help seeing it myself when he came to the front door because he stood on the top step stark naked. Didn't seem very cold, though. He had a water-bottle under his arm instead of a hat.

BILL. Those church bells have certainly left their mark on you.

HARRY. They haven't helped, but the fact of the matter is, old chap, that I don't like strangers coming into my house without an invitation. (*He pauses*) Who is this man and what does he want?

(*There is a pause. BILL rises*)

BILL. Will you excuse me? I really think it's about time I was dressed, don't you?

(*BILL exits up the stairs, taking the paper with him.*)

HARRY, *after a moment, rises and follows Bill off up the*

stairs. The lights on the room L and the hall fade. In the room R, JAMES is reading. STELLA is sitting silently)

STELLA (*after a pause*) What do you think about going for a run today—in the country?

(There is a pause. JAMES puts the paper down)

JAMES. I've come to a decision.

STELLA. What?

JAMES. I'm going to go and see him.

STELLA. See him? Who? (*She pauses*) What for?

JAMES. Oh—have a chat with him.

STELLA. What's the point of doing that?

JAMES. I feel I'd like to.

STELLA. I just don't see—what there is to be gained. What's the point of it? (*She pauses*) What are you going to do—hit him?

JAMES. No, no. I'd just like to hear what he's got to say.

STELLA. Why?

JAMES. I want to know what his attitude is.

STELLA (*after a pause*) He doesn't matter.

JAMES. What do you mean?

STELLA. He's not important.

JAMES. Do you mean anyone would have done? You mean it just happened to be him, but it might as well have been anyone?

STELLA. No. (*She sips her coffee*)

JAMES. What then?

STELLA. Of course it couldn't have been anyone. It was him. It was just—something . . .

JAMES. That's what I mean. It was him. That's why I think he's worth having a look at. I want to see what he's like. It'll be instructive, educational.

(There is a pause. STELLA puts her cup down)

STELLA. Please don't go and see him. You don't know where he lives, anyway.

JAMES. You don't think I should see him?

STELLA. It won't—make you feel any better.

JAMES. I want to see if he's changed.

STELLA. What do you mean?

JAMES. I want to see if he's changed from when I last saw him. He may have gone down the drain since I last saw him. I must say he looked in good shape, though.

STELLA. You've never seen him. (*She pauses*) You don't know him. (*She pauses*) You don't know where he lives. (*She pauses*) When did you see him?

JAMES. We had dinner together last night.

STELLA. What?

JAMES. Splendid host.

STELLA. I don't believe it.

JAMES. Ever been to his place? (*He pauses*) Rather nice. Ever been there?

STELLA. I met him in Leeds, that's all.

JAMES. Oh, is that all? Well, we'll have to go round there one night. The grub's good, I can't deny it. I found him quite charming. (*He pauses*) He remembered the occasion well. He was perfectly frank. You know—a man's man. Straight from the shoulder. He entirely confirmed your story.

STELLA. Did he?

JAMES. Mmm. Only thing—he rather implied that you led him on. Typical masculine thing to say, of course.

STELLA. That's a lie.

JAMES. You know what men are. I reminded him that you'd resisted, that you'd hated the whole thing, but that you'd been—how can we say—somehow hypnotized by him, it happens sometimes. He agreed it can happen sometimes. He told me he'd been hypnotized once by a cat. Wouldn't go into any more details, though. Still, I must admit we rather hit it off. We've got the same interests. He was most amusing over the brandy.

STELLA. I'm not interested.

JAMES. In fact he was most amusing over the whole thing.

STELLA. Was he?

JAMES. But especially over the brandy. He's got the right attitude, you see. As a man, I can only admire it.

STELLA. What is his attitude?

JAMES. What's your attitude?

STELLA. I don't know what you're—I just don't know what you're—I just—hoped you'd understand. (*She covers her face, crying*)

JAMES. Well, I do understand, but only after meeting him. Now I'm perfectly happy. I can see it both ways, three ways, all ways—every way. It's perfectly clear, there's nothing to it, everything's back to normal. The only difference is that I've come across a man I can respect. It isn't often you can do that, that that happens, and really I suppose I've got you to thank. (*He bends forward and pats Stella's arm*) Thanks.

(*There is a pause. STELLA rises and moves behind the sofa*)

He reminds me of a bloke I went to school with. Hawkins. Honestly, he reminded me of Hawkins. Hawkins was an opera fan, too. So's what's-his-name. I'm a bit of an opera fan myself. Always kept it a dead secret. I might go along with your bloke to the opera one night. (*He rises and moves to the radiogram*) He says he can always get free seats. (*He takes the record from the turntable and puts it in its sleeve*) He knows quite a few of that crowd. Maybe I can track old Hawkins down and take him along, too. (*He puts the record in the record cabinet*) He's a very cultivated bloke, your bloke, quite a considerable intelligence at work there, I thought. He's got a collection of Chinese pots stuck on the wall, must have cost at least fifteen hundred a piece. Well, you can't help noticing that sort of thing. I mean, you couldn't say he wasn't a man of taste. He's brimming over with it. Well, I suppose he must have struck you the same way. No, really, I think I should thank you, rather than anything else. After two years of marriage it looks as though, by accident, you've opened up a whole new world to me.

(*The lights on the room R fade and come up on the room and hall L. It is night. BILL enters L from the kitchen, carrying a tray with cheese, crisps, snacks, etc., some clean glasses and a transistor radio, which is playing. He puts the tray on the table,*

transfers the glasses to the sideboard, pours himself a drink, goes to the table, takes a crisp and eats it.

JAMES enters R in the street, crosses to the front door and rings the bell. BILL goes into the hall and opens the door. JAMES comes into the hall, hangs up his coat, goes into the living-room and looks at the vases on the wall up L. BILL closes the door, goes into the living-room, moves to the sideboard and pours a drink for James. The lights come up on the telephone-box.

HARRY enters L and goes into the box. The lights in the box come on. The telephone R, rings. The radio music softens. The lights come up on the room R.

STELLA enters R, carrying the cat. She puts the cat on the sofa, goes to the telephone and lifts the receiver)

STELLA (into the telephone) Hullo?

(HARRY'S voice is heard)

HARRY (through the telephone) Is that you, James?

STELLA. What? No, it isn't. Who's this?

HARRY. Where's James?

STELLA. He's out.

HARRY. Out? Oh, well, all right. I'll be straight round.

STELLA. What are you talking about? Who are you?

HARRY. Don't go out.

(HARRY replaces the receiver, leaves the telephone-box and exits up R. The light in the box goes out. STELLA replaces her receiver then sits on the sofa. The lights on the telephone-box fades. The lights on the room R fade to half. BILL, in the room L, hands a drink to JAMES. They clink glasses and drink)

JAMES. You know something? You remind me of a chap I knew once. Hawkins. Yes. He was quite a tall lad.

BILL. Tall, was he?

JAMES. Yes.

BILL. Now why would I remind you of him?

JAMES. He was quite a card.

BILL (after a pause) Tall, was he?

JAMES. That's—what he was.

BILL. Well, you're not short.

JAMES. I'm not tall.

BILL. Quite broad.

JAMES. That doesn't make me tall.

BILL. I never said it did.

JAMES. Well, what are you saying?

BILL. Nothing.

JAMES. I wouldn't exactly say I was broad, either.

BILL. Well, you only see yourself in the mirror, don't you?

JAMES. That's good enough for me.

BILL. They're deceptive.

JAMES. Mirrors?

BILL. Very.

JAMES. Have you got one?

BILL. What?

JAMES. A mirror.

BILL. There's one right in front of you.

JAMES. So there is. *(He moves down C and looks out front, presumably into a mirror assumed to be over the fireplace)* Come here. You look in it, too.

(BILL moves to L of JAMES. They look together and then JAMES goes first to the left of the mirror and then to the right, looking at Bill's reflection)

I don't think mirrors are deceptive. *(He moves to the chair down L and sits)*

(BILL offers James a cigarette from the box on the sideboard. JAMES refuses. BILL sits on the chair R of the table. The lights on the room L and the hall fade to half. The lights on the room R come up to full. A doorbell rings off R. The radio music fades out.)

STELLA rises and exits R)

STELLA *(off)* Yes?

HARRY *(off)* I wonder if I might have a word with you?
No need to be alarmed. May I come in?

(The front door is heard to close)

How do you do? My name's Kane. In here?

STELLA. Yes.

(HARRY and STELLA enter R)

HARRY (*crossing to L of the sofa*) What a beautiful lamp.

STELLA (*standing R of the sofa*) What can I do for you?

HARRY. Do you know Bill Lloyd?

STELLA (*after a pause*) No.

HARRY. Oh, you don't?

STELLA. No.

HARRY. You don't know him personally?

STELLA. I don't, no.

HARRY. I found him in a slum, you know, by accident. Just happened to be in a slum one day and there he was. I realized he had talent straight away. I gave him a roof, gave him a job and he came up trumps. We've been close friends for years.

(*There is a pause. STELLA moves to the radiogram and takes a cigarette from the box on it*)

STELLA. Oh, yes?

HARRY. You know of him, of course, don't you, by repute? He's a dress designer.

STELLA. I know of him.

HARRY. You're both dress designers.

STELLA. Yes.

HARRY. You don't belong to the *Rags and Bags Club*, do you?

STELLA. The what?

HARRY. The *Rags and Bags Club*. I thought I might have seen you down there.

STELLA. No, I don't know it.

HARRY (*moving to Stella and lighting her cigarette*) Shame. You'd like it. (*He pauses*) Yes. (*He pauses and moves above the coffee-table*) I've come about your husband.

STELLA. Oh?

HARRY. Yes. He's been bothering Bill recently, with some fantastic story.

STELLA. I know about it.

HARRY. Oh, you know?

STELLA. Yes. (*She sits on the sofa*) I'm very sorry.

HARRY (*sitting in the armchair*) Well, it's really been rather disturbing. I mean, the boy has his work to get on with. This sort of thing spoils his concentration.

STELLA. I'm sorry. It's—very unfortunate.

HARRY. It is.

(*There is a pause*)

STELLA. I can't understand it. We've been happily married for two years, you see. I've—been away before, you know—showing dresses, here and there—my husband runs the business. But it's never happened before.

HARRY. What hasn't?

STELLA. Well, that my husband has suddenly invented such a fantastic story, for no reason at all.

HARRY. That's what I said it was. I said it was a fantastic story.

STELLA. It is.

HARRY. That's what I said and that's what Bill says. We both think it's a fantastic story.

STELLA. I mean, Mr Lloyd was in Leeds, but I hardly saw him, even though we were both staying in the same hotel. I never met him or spoke to him—and then my husband suddenly accused me of . . . It's really been very distressing.

HARRY. Yes. What do you think the answer is? Do you think your husband—doesn't trust you, or something?

STELLA. Of course he does—he's just not been very well lately, actually—overwork.

HARRY. That's bad. Still, you know what it's like in our business. Why don't you take him on a long holiday? South of France.

STELLA. Yes. I'm very sorry that Mr Lloyd has had to put up with all this, anyway.

HARRY (*rising*) Oh, what a beautiful kitten, what a really beautiful kitten. Kitty, kitty, kitty—what do you call her? Come here, kitty—kitty. (*He sits beside Stella on the sofa and pets and nuzzles the cat*)

(*The lights on the room R fade to half. The lights on the room L and the hall come up to full. BILL and JAMES are still seated with their drinks*)

BILL. Hungry?

JAMES. No.

BILL. Biscuit?

JAMES. I'm not hungry.

BILL. I've got some olives.

JAMES. Really?

BILL. Like one?

JAMES. No, thanks.

BILL. Why not?

JAMES. I don't like them.

BILL (*after a pause*) Don't like olives? (*He pauses*) What on earth have you got against olives?

JAMES (*after a pause*) I detest them.

BILL. Really?

JAMES. It's the smell I hate.

BILL (*after a pause*) Cheese? I've got a splendid cheese knife. (*He picks up a cheese knife from the tray, rises and moves to James*) Look. Don't you think it's splendid?

JAMES. Is it sharp?

BILL. Try it. Hold the blade. It won't cut you. Not if you handle it properly. Not if you grasp it firmly up to the hilt.

(*JAMES does not touch the knife. BILL stands holding it. The lights on the room R come up to full*)

HARRY (*rising*) Well, good-bye. I'm glad we've had our little chat.

STELL (*rising*) Yes.

HARRY. It's all quite clear now.

STELLA. I'm glad.

HARRY. Oh, Mr Lloyd asked me if I would give you his best wishes—and sympathies.

(*STELLA and HARRY exit R*)

(*Off*) Good-bye.

(The front door is heard to close.)

STELLA *re-enters R, takes a cigarette from the box on the radiogram, lights it, then lies on the sofa, rests her head back and is still. The lights on the room R fade to half)*

BILL. What are you frightened of?

JAMES *(rising and crossing to R)* What's that?

BILL. What?

JAMES. I thought it was thunder.

BILL *(moving to L of James)* Why are you frightened of holding this blade?

JAMES. I'm not frightened. I was just thinking of the thunder last week, when you and my wife were in Leeds.

BILL. Oh, not again, surely? I thought we'd left all that behind. Surely we have? You're not still worried about that, are you?

JAMES. Oh, no. Just nostalgia, that's all.

BILL. Surely the wound heals when you know the truth, doesn't it? I mean, when the truth is verified. I would have thought it did.

JAMES *(moving to the table)* Of course.

BILL *(following James)* What's there left to think about? It's a thing regretted, never to be repeated. No past, no future. Do you see what I mean? *(He moves down C)* You're a chap who's been married for two years, aren't you, happily?

(HARRY enters up R in the street and crosses to the front door)

There's a bond of iron between you and your wife. It can't be corroded by a trivial thing like this. I've apologized, she's apologized. Honestly, what more can you want?

(There is a pause. JAMES looks at BILL, who smiles. HARRY comes quietly into the hall, and remains there unnoticed by the others)

JAMES. Nothing.

BILL. Every woman is bound to have an outburst of—wild sensuality at one time or another. That's the way I

look at it, anyway. It's part of their nature. Even though it may be the kind of sensuality of which you yourself have never been the fortunate recipient. What? *(He laughs)* That is a husband's fate, I suppose. Mind you, I think it's the system that's at fault, not you. Perhaps she'll never need to do it again, who knows?

(JAMES picks up a fruit knife from the table and runs his finger along the blade)

JAMES. This is fairly sharp.

BILL. What do you mean?

JAMES. Come on.

BILL. I beg your pardon?

JAMES. Come on. You've got that one. I've got this one.

BILL. What about it?

JAMES. I get a bit tired of words sometimes, don't you? Let's have a game. For fun.

BILL. What sort of game?

JAMES. Let's have a mock duel.

BILL. I don't want a mock duel, thank you.

JAMES. Of course you do. Come on. First one who's touched is a sissy.

BILL. This is all rather unsubtle, don't you think?

JAMES. Not in the least. Come on, into first position.

BILL. I thought we were friends.

JAMES. Of course we're friends. What on earth's the matter with you? I'm not going to kill you. It's just a game, that's all. We're playing a game. You're not windy, are you?

BILL. I think it's silly.

JAMES. I say, you're a bit of a spoilsport, aren't you?

BILL. I'm putting my knife down, anyway. *(He puts his knife on the table and moves down L)*

JAMES. Well, I'll pick it up. *(He picks up the cheese knife, moves down LG and faces Bill)*

BILL. Now you've got two.

JAMES. I've got another one in my hip pocket.

BILL *(after a pause)* What do you do, swallow them?

JAMES. Do you?

(There is a pause. They stare at each other)

(Suddenly) Go on! Swallow it! *(He throws the cheese knife at Bill's face)*

(BILL throws up his hand to protect his face and catches the knife by the blade. It cuts his hand)

BILL. Ow!

JAMES. Well caught! What's the matter? *(He moves to Bill and examines his hand)* Let's have a look. Ah, yes. Now you've got a scar on your hand. You didn't have one before, did you?

(HARRY comes into the room)

HARRY *(moving between James and Bill)* What have you done, nipped your hand? Let's have a look. *(To James)* Only a little nip, isn't it? It's his own fault for not ducking. I must have told him dozens of times, you know, that if someone throws a knife at you the silliest thing you can do is to catch it. You're bound to hurt yourself, unless it's made of rubber. The safest thing to do is duck. You're Mr Horne?

JAMES. That's right.

HARRY. I'm so glad to meet you. *(He shakes hands with James)* My name's Harry Kane. Bill been looking after you all right? I asked him to see that you stayed until I got back, so glad you could spare the time. What are we drinking? Whisky? Let's fill you up. *(He collects James' glass, goes to the sideboard and pours two drinks)*

(BILL sits on the chair down L)

You and your wife run that little boutique down the road, don't you? *(He crosses to James)* Funny we've never met, living so close, all in the same trade, eh? *(He hands James his glass)* Here you are. Got one, Bill? Where's your glass? This one? *(He collects Bill's glass, refills it and hands it to him)* Here—you are. Oh, stop rubbing your hand, for goodness'

sake. It's only a cheese knife. (*He collects his own drink and turns to James*) Well, Mr Horne, all the very best. Here's wishing us all health, happiness and prosperity in the time to come, not forgetting your wife, of course. Healthy minds in healthy bodies. Cheers. (*He drinks then sits L of the table*)

(JAMES drinks)

By the way, I've just seen your wife, what a beautiful kitten she has, you should see it, Bill, it's all white. We had a very pleasant chat, your wife and I. Listen—old chap—can I be quite blunt with you?

JAMES. Of course.

HARRY. Your wife—you see—made a little tiny confession to me. I think I can use that word. (*He pauses*)

(BILL is sucking his hand)

What she confessed was—that she'd made the whole thing up. She'd made the whole damn thing up. For some odd reason of her own. They never met, you know, Bill and your wife, they never even spoke. This is what Bill says, and this is now what your wife admits. They had nothing whatever to do with each other, they don't know each other. Women are very strange. But I suppose you know more about them than I do, she's your wife. If I were you I'd go home and knock her over the head with a saucepan and tell her not to make up such stories again.

(*There is a long pause*)

JAMES. She made the whole thing up, eh?

HARRY. I'm afraid she did.

JAMES. I see. Well, thanks very much for telling me.

HARRY. I thought it would be clearer for you, coming from someone completely outside the whole matter.

JAMES. Yes. Thank you.

HARRY. Isn't that so, Bill?

BILL. Oh, quite so. I don't even know the woman. Wouldn't know her if I saw her. Pure fantasy.

JAMES. How's your hand?

BILL. Not bad.

JAMES. Isn't it strange that you confirmed the whole of her story?

BILL. It amused me to do so.

JAMES. Oh?

BILL. Yes. You amused me. You wanted me to confirm it. It amused me to do so.

(There is a pause)

HARRY. Bill's a slum boy, you see, he's got a slum sense of humour. That's why I never take him along with me to parties. Because he's got a slum mind. I have nothing against slum minds *per se*, you understand, nothing at all. There's a certain kind of slum mind which is perfectly all right in a slum, but when this kind of slum mind gets out of the slum it sometimes persists, you see, it rots everything. That's what Bill is. There's something faintly putrid about him, don't you find? Like a slug. There's nothing wrong with slugs, in their place, but he's a slum slug, there's nothing wrong with slum slugs in their place, but this one won't keep his place, he crawls all over the walls of nice houses, leaving slime, don't you, boy? He confirms stupid, sordid little stories just to amuse himself, while everyone else has to run round in circles to get to the root of the matter and smooth the whole thing out. All he can do is sit and suck his bloody hand and decompose like the filthy putrid slum slug he is. *(He rises and moves to James)* What about another whisky, Horne?

JAMES *(moving up c)* No, I think I must be off, now.

HARRY. Oh?

JAMES. Well, I'm glad to hear that nothing did happen. Great relief to me.

HARRY. It must be.

JAMES. My wife's not been very well lately, actually. Overwork.

HARRY. That's bad. Still, you know what it's like in our business.

JAMES. Best thing to do is take her on a long holiday, I think.

HARRY. South of France.

JAMES. The Greek islands.

HARRY. Sun's essential, of course.

JAMES. I know. Bermuda.

HARRY. Perfect.

JAMES. Well, thanks very much, Mr Kane, for clearing my mind. I don't think I'll mention it when I get home. Take her out for a drink or something. Forget all about it.

HARRY. Better hurry up. It's nearly closing time.

(JAMES moves and stands over Bill)

JAMES. I'm very sorry I cut your hand. You're lucky you caught it, of course. Otherwise it might have cut your mouth. Still, it's not too bad, is it? (*He pauses*) Look—I really think I ought to apologize for this silly story my wife made up. The fault is really all hers, and mine, for believing her. You're not to blame for taking it as you did. The whole thing must have been an impossible burden for you. What do you say we shake hands, as a testimony of my good will? (*He extends his hand*)

(BILL rubs his hand and does not extend it)

HARRY. Come on, Billy, I think we've had enough of this stupidity, don't you?

(JAMES looks sharply at Bill)

BILL. I never touched her—we sat—in the lounge, on a sofa—for two hours—talked—we talked about it—we didn't—move from the lounge—never went to her room—just talked—about what we would do—if we did go to her room—two hours—we never touched—we just talked about it . . .

(*There is a long silence.*)

JAMES goes out by the front door and exits up R. BILL, still sitting down L, sucks his hand. HARRY sits R of the table. The lights on the room L and the hall fade to half. The lights on the room R come up to full. STELLA, with the cat, is lying on the sofa. The front door off R is heard to slam.

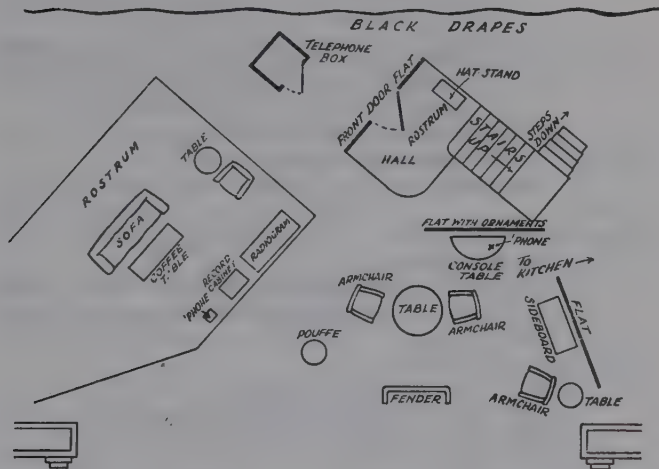
JAMES enters R, stands behind the sofa and looks at Stella. There is a silence. STELLA strokes the cat)

JAMES. You didn't do anything, did you? (*He pauses*) He wasn't in your room. You just talked about it, in the lounge. (*He pauses*) That's the truth, isn't it? (*He pauses*) You just sat and talked about what you would do, if you went to your room. That's what you did. (*He pauses*) Didn't you? (*He pauses and sits in the armchair*) That's the truth—isn't it?

STELLA looks at James, neither confirming nor denying. Her face is friendly, sympathetic. The lights on the room R fade to half. There is a long pause. The four figures are still, in the half light, then the lights dim to BLACK-OUT as—

the CURTAIN falls

FURNITURE AND PROPERTY LIST



On stage: Harry's house L:

Round table. *On it:* white cloth, bowl of fruit with grapes and fruit knife

2 carver chairs

Sideboard. *On it:* tray, 4 glasses, various bottles, ashtray, silver candlesticks, box with cigarettes, matches

Low-backed fireside chair

Occasional table (down L) *On it:* magazines

Console table (up c) *On it:* telephone

On wall behind console table: brackets with figurines

Pouffe (R)

Carpet on floor

Fender and fire-irons (down c)

In hall: hatstand. *In it*: umbrella, cane, Bill's coat
On front door: practical doorbell

James' flat R:

Sofa. *On it*: cushions

Low coffee-table. *On it*: ashtray, cup of coffee

Armchair

Occasional-table. *On it*: table-lamp

Radiogram. *On it*: ashtray, box with cigarettes,
 matches, Stella's gloves, purse, and handbag.

In handbag: bracelet, perfume atomizer

Record cabinet. *In it*: records

Telephone (down c)

Telephone-box: *In it*: telephone and coin box

Off stage: Coat (STELLA)

Cigarette (JAMES)

Tray. *On it*: 2 glasses fruit juice, toast rack, 2 cups,
 2 saucers, 2 teaspoons, pot of tea, jug of milk, sugar
 basin (BILL)

Magazines (BILL)

White Persian kitten (STELLA)

Tray. *On it*: breakfast for two, newspaper (HARRY)

Tray. *On it*: pot of coffee, milk, sugar, 2 cups, 2
 saucers, 2 spoons, plate of biscuits (STELLA)

Tray. *On it*: cheese board with cheese and knife, cheese
 biscuits, plate of celery, carrot and olives, clean
 glasses, dish of crisps (BILL)

Transistor radio (BILL)

Personal: STELLA: handbag

JAMES: wallet

LIGHTING PLOT

Property fittings required: table-lamp

THE MAIN ACTING AREAS are a room R, a room L, an entrance hall up LC and a telephone-box up LC

To open: The rooms in darkness. Moonlight effect in street up LC. Telephone-box interior light on. Hall area lit

- | | | |
|-------|--|----------|
| Cue 1 | HARRY switches on lights
<i>Bring up lights on room L</i> | (Page 1) |
| Cue 2 | JAMES leaves telephone-box
<i>Snap out telephone-box light</i>
<i>Fade out street moonlight</i> | (Page 2) |
| Cue 3 | HARRY switches off lights
<i>Fade out lights on room L and hall</i>
<i>Bring in lights on room R for daylight effect</i> | (Page 2) |
| Cue 4 | STELLA exits
<i>Fade lights on room R to half</i>
<i>Bring up lights on room L and hall for daylight effect</i> | (Page 3) |
| Cue 5 | JAMES exits R
<i>Fade lights on room R</i> | (Page 4) |
| Cue 6 | HARRY: "No, thank you."
<i>Bring up lights on telephone-box to half</i> | (Page 5) |
| Cue 7 | JAMES enters telephone-box
<i>Snap in box light</i> | (Page 5) |
| Cue 8 | JAMES leaves telephone-box
<i>Snap out telephone-box light</i> | (Page 6) |

- Cue 9 JAMES and HARRY exit (Page 7)
Fade lights on room L
Fade lights on telephone-box
Bring up lights on room R for moonlight effect
- Cue 10 Front door R slams (Page 7)
Snap on hall light off R
- Cue 11 STELLA switches on table-lamp (Page 7)
Snap in lights on room R to half
- Cue 12 STELLA exits R (Page 8)
Bring up lights on room and hall L
- Cue 13 STELLA lies on sofa (Page 8)
Fade hall light R
- Cue 14 JAMES rings doorbell (Page 8)
Dim lights on room R a little
- Cue 15 STELLA exits R (Page 10)
Fade lights and table-lamp in room R
- Cue 16 BILL: "Lying." (Page 16)
Black-Out
- Cue 17 Follows above cue (Page 16)
Bring up lights on room R, room L and hall
- Cue 18 BILL and HARRY exit up the stairs (Page 20)
Fade lights on room L and hall
- Cue 19 JAMES: "... world to me." (Page 22)
*Fade lights on room R and bring up lights on room
and hall L*
- Cue 20 JAMES enters by front door (Page 23)
Bring up lights on telephone-box
- Cue 21 HARRY enters telephone-box (Page 23)
Snap in light in telephone-box
- Cue 22 Telephone R rings (Page 23)
Bring up lights on room R

-
- Cue 23 HARRY leaves telephone-box (Page 23)
Snap out light in telephone-box
Fade lights on telephone-box
Fade lights on room R to half
- Cue 24 BILL sits (Page 24)
Fade lights on room L and hall to half
Bring up lights on room R to full
- Cue 25 HARRY sits on the sofa (Page 27)
Fade lights on room R to half
Bring up lights on room L and hall to full
- Cue 26 BILL: ". . . to the hilt." (Page 27)
Bring up lights on room R to full
- Cue 27 STELLA lies on sofa (Page 28)
Fade lights on room R to half
- Cue 28 JAMES exits (Page 33)
Fade lights on room L to half
Bring up lights on room R to full
- Cue 29 JAMES: "That's the truth—isn't it?" (Page 34)
Fade lights on room R to half
- Cue 30 Follows above cue after a long pause (Page 34)
Dim all lights to BLACK-OUT

EFFECTS PLOT

- | | | |
|--------|---|-----------|
| Cue 1 | At rise of CURTAIN
<i>Telephone L rings</i> | (Page 1) |
| Cue 2 | STELLA exits
<i>Front door R slams</i> | (Page 3) |
| Cue 3 | HARRY exits
<i>Telephone L rings</i> | (Page 6) |
| Cue 4 | JAMES and HARRY exit
<i>Front door R slams</i> | (Page 7) |
| Cue 5 | STELLA switches on radiogram
<i>Cool jazz music</i> | (Page 8) |
| Cue 6 | JAMES rings doorbell
<i>Fade music to out</i> | (Page 8) |
| Cue 7 | BILL: "Lying."
<i>Sound of church bells</i> | (Page 16) |
| Cue 8 | After lights come up
<i>Fade bells</i> | (Page 16) |
| Cue 9 | JAMES: ". . . them or not."
<i>Telephone L rings</i> | (Page 18) |
| Cue 10 | BILL enters with transistor radio
<i>Radio music</i> | (Page 22) |
| Cue 11 | HARRY enters telephone-box
<i>Telephone R rings</i>
<i>Reduce volume of radio music to half</i> | (Page 23) |
| Cue 12 | The lights come up on room R
<i>Doorbell rings off R</i>
<i>Radio music fades out</i> | (Page 24) |

-
- Cue 13 HARRY: "May I come in?" (Page 24)
Door closes off R
- Cue 14 HARRY: "Good-bye." (Page 28)
Door closes off R
- Cue 15 Lights come up on room R (Page 33)
Door slams off R



1911103317

BIRKBECK CEMS



19 1110331 7

WITHDRAWN

~~168661~~

HAROLD PINTER

THE
COLLECTION

GB 573 02036 1

FRENCH'S
THEATRE
BOOKSHOP

20p
NET

KI-255-414

